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ABSTRACT

This ERIC Digest reports on the outcomes of a conference of teachers, college history professors, teacher educators, and state and local school board members. The theme of the meeting was that if, according to the standards-based strategy for democratic school reform, all students in every school are to be offered an equally solid and engaging study of history, then all teachers need an equally rigorous preparation to teach them. The problems treated were how to explore conditions under which subject matter mastery can be nurtured among history teachers, and how to determine the changes needed to bring about and sustain those conditions. Conferees recommended that prospective teachers of history in the middle and high school should have a college major organized around main topics and significant questions in specific areas of history and their related areas of study. Conferees recommended that colleges of education reduce the required number of generic methods courses in order to offer more courses by subject experts and experienced practicing teachers. Recommendations were made to history professors that university administrators must establish personnel policies that end the disincentives for history faculty to work with outside departments and to mentor preservice teachers. State departments of education must redesign teacher licensure and expect that certification examinations are rigorous. Local districts need to establish procedures and criteria for evaluating teacher candidate subject area qualifications. College governing boards must insure that changes occur in admissions, core course requirements, incentives for faculty, and department majors. (EH)

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The Education and Certification of History Teachers: Trends, Problems, and Recommendations

by the National Council for History Education

History teachers who know their subject matter well are indispensable to schools striving to hold students to higher academic standards. This is a major concern for teacher education in history, according to a recent national conference of teacher educators, academic historians, K-12 classroom history teachers, and members of state and local governing boards.

The major theme of the conference was that if, according to the standards-based strategy for democratic school reform, all students in every school are to be offered an equally solid and engaging study of history, then all teachers need equally rigorous preparation to teach them. The problems treated at the conference were how to explore the conditions under which subject matter mastery can be nurtured among history teachers, and how to determine the changes needed to bring about and sustain those conditions.

Suggested solutions pertained to better connections between history and education college faculty and the university and local schools. A six-part action plan was developed that centered on action by and for:

- teachers;
- education school faculty members and deans;
- university historians and department chairs;
- local school administrators and school committees/board members;
- representatives of state departments of education; and
- members of state education and university governing boards.

Teachers. Conferees recommended that prospective teachers of history in middle and high school should have a college major organized around main topics and significant questions in United States history, the history of Western civilization and of the world, and related studies in civics, geography, philosophy, literature, and the arts.

A further recommendation went beyond undergraduate preparation to the sphere of continuing education for practicing teachers: no matter how well prepared as undergraduates, teachers have a responsibility to themselves and to their students to continue their studies, both in state and local programs for professional development and on their own.

Moreover, the thousands of history and social studies teachers now in classrooms whose college preparation in history is weak must undertake intensive professional development, including summer institutes, to deepen their knowledge and pleasure in teaching history.

Colleges of Education. Conferees recommended that college of education faculty be given the authority to reduce the required number of generic methods courses in order to offer more courses taught by teams of subject scholars and experienced teachers in the field.

Furthermore, participants recommended that education faculties, together with colleagues from history departments, should redesign the undergraduate experience of prospective teachers to achieve a better balance between education courses and subject matter courses in history.

University administrators and trustees need to revise policies that make it difficult for education faculty members to mend the "jagged disconnect" between subject matter and pedagogy by joining colleagues in history departments in merged courses, doing student-teacher mentoring with historians and master teachers, and working with historians on professional development for teachers at neighboring schools, preferably at school sites.

University Historians. These points were made by and to university historians and department chairs: historians must press university administrators and trustees to establish sustainable personnel policies that end the disincentives for history faculty members to work with colleagues in other departments to educate and mentor prospective teachers. In addition, history faculties must review the character and requirements of their major and minor programs (with advice from graduates who have become classroom teachers). General education requirements for the freshman and sophomore years did not escape scrutiny; conferees recommended that historians must join their colleagues in the arts and sciences to refocus general education on basic core courses, including for all students courses in United States history, Western civilization, and world history. Teachers with bachelors' degrees, particularly those working in middle and high school, should not have last studied topics in world history as long ago as Grade 9 or 10. Some specific recommendations were that history faculties must be authorized to:

- reduce the number of highly specialized courses for undergraduates;
- provide more upper-level, broad-based courses in major eras of United States history, the history of Western civilization, and of the world;
- model the use of primary sources and student inquiry in their own courses; and

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For further information, contact Elaine Wrisley Reed, Executive Director, National Council for History Education, at 26915 Westwood Road, Suite B-2, Westlake, Ohio 44145 or phone (440) 835-1776. The National Council for History Education convened the conference *Preparing Knowledgeable and Effective History Teachers* in partnership with the University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents with major funding from The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation.

- forge regular working relationships with history teachers in neighboring communities.

State Departments of Education. Conferees urged state departments of education to redesign teacher licensure and recertification examinations to test subject mastery. The examinations should be formidable; that is, they should be comparable to exemplary final examinations at the university level and should include evaluation of writing and speaking ability.

State departments of education must consistently devote their priorities, review of regulations, and technical assistance to support steady, long-term local implementation of the state academic standards, which pertain to the core subjects and how to teach them, including history.

In regard to professional development in history, state departments need to collaborate with local school districts and institutions of higher education to set criteria for approval of professional development providers of state or locally funded programs for classroom teachers in academic subjects. Such criteria should include the providers' academic qualifications and experience and the relevance of proposed programs to the curricular goals of states and localities.

Local School Administrators and School Boards. To the extent that state boards and departments of education establish common curricular requirements, content standards, and performance benchmarks for statewide assessment of student achievement, state support and technical assistance must be available to local districts for a) implementing new curricula and courses in history; b) refreshing and extending teacher content knowledge in history; and c) instructing and re-integrating teachers who are displaced by curricular changes.

School districts should establish regular procedures and criteria for evaluating teacher applicants who will be teaching history courses, including exploration of academic records and references for the history courses taken in undergraduate programs and interviews dealing with candidates' scholarly interests in the various areas of historical knowledge.

Governing Boards. Members of state education and university governing boards must take responsibility for insuring the implementation of the above changes, focusing on those that state and local officers and university presidents and deans for many reasons often cannot make on their own. Vital among these necessary changes are stricter college admissions requirements, specific core requirements for the general education of freshmen and sophomores, reformed department majors, broader doctoral programs to prepare college teachers, and revised incentives for faculties of education and arts and sciences.

Lay board members should engage and educate the media and inform the public and its elected officials on questions fundamental to the quality and equality of educational opportunities.

Conclusions. The primary goal of all six spheres that were identified as fundamental in the undergraduate and continuing education of teachers is competence, together with persistence in the face of a number of likely defeats. While each "sphere of influence" and action was identified separately, conference participants noted that the spheres overlapped and interacted at almost every turn; therefore, each group is urged to consider the recommendations for all of the groups, not only their own. While governing boards may be held accountable for the quality of their institutions, historians should recognize that the failure of any one sector is enough to cause the failure of all.

References and ERIC Resources. The following list of resources includes references used to prepare this Digest. The items followed by an ED number are available in microfiche and/or paper copies from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). For information about prices, contact EDRS, 7420 Fullerton Road, Suite 110, Springfield, Virginia 22153-2852; telephone numbers are (703) 440-1400 and (800) 443-3742. Entries followed by an EJ number, annotated monthly in CURRENT INDEX TO JOURNALS IN EDUCATION (CIJE), are not available through EDRS. However, they can be located in the journal section of most larger libraries by using the bibliographic information provided, requested through Interlibrary Loan, or ordered from commercial reprint services.

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